



City of Aurora • Office of the Aldermen

44 East Downer Place • Aurora, Illinois 60507-2067 • (630) 844-3619 • FAX (630) 892-1104

Memorandum

TO: Mayor Thomas Weisner
City of Aurora Aldermen

FROM: Alderman Stephanie Kifowit

DATE: November 9, 2010

RE: Possible Public Safety Personnel Layoffs

Mayor Weisner,

On November 2, 2010, the newspapers reported a possible layoff of police personnel to be more than 20 police officers. While I understand the severity of the current budget crisis, with a projected General Fund deficit of over \$18 million, I must stress that a public safety layoff of any kind for police and fire should be avoided.

The City of Aurora has made great strides in the fight against crime, particularly in the Near East Side of Aurora, and I fear that a reduction of this magnitude will result in a return of the problem areas our Community Policing Officers, in conjunction with the rest of the Aurora Police Officers, have worked so hard to address. I do not support the elimination of the Community Policing Officers or the Resource Officers for the schools, and request the officers be allowed to continue with all crime suppression initiatives they need to keep our residents safe.

While I have not had the opportunity to review the proposed fiscal year 2011 budget, I would like to offer the following as solutions in order to continue a high standard of public safety for our residents through proper staffing levels of police and fire personnel and avoid any potential layoffs.

I believe that there does need to be some shared sacrifice in order to keep a sound financial position for the City of Aurora, and I believe there should be some reasonable concessions given the gravity of the current economic situation.

Current Economic Situation

The facts are clear, the rate of foreclosures have a negative impact on property values. The State of Illinois is in the top 10 list for foreclosures (16,808 Illinois properties receiving foreclosure filings based on the U.S. Foreclosure Market Report for August 2010) thus, clearly showing that the State as a whole is still in an economic crisis. This translates to foreclosure properties in Aurora continuing to cause a depressed property tax revenue stream that accounts for part of the substantial budget deficit for the fiscal year 2011 budget cycle.

Many states and municipalities throughout the nation are experiencing unprecedented budget deficits for not only realized in fiscal year 2010 but now projected for fiscal year 2011 and quite plausibly for fiscal year 2012. The economic hardship can be easily seen in the massive deficit



projected for the State of Illinois and the inability of the State to pay its obligations in a timely fashion.

In budgeting for the fiscal year 2011 cycle, I trust that the City of Aurora is trying to avoid the pitfalls that have caused the State of Illinois such financial strife. Below are some possible solutions outside of reviewing our current public safety related fees and implementing new fees, such as the localization of DUI prosecutions.

Possible Solutions

I applaud the initiatives by the City of Aurora to produce employment opportunities for the residents of Aurora. Through economic development, we can begin to climb out of the recession by attributing jobs and necessary spending dollars to generate property taxes and sales taxes within the City of Aurora.

However, the major economic development tool has been through development assistance programs. During the fiscal year ending December 31, 2009, approximately \$5,270,899 in property taxes and \$10,872,342 in sales taxes were rebated under development agreements¹. I propose we re-negotiate these agreements for implementing longer amortization schedules which would reduce the annual amount of rebates during these tough economic times.

Several years ago, the City Council created the SHAPE fund to help with some of the costs associated with public safety. While the SHAPE fund is committed to some existing projects; I would request any surplus revenue or fund balance be to maintain our public safety personnel and negate any possible layoffs.

As a very last resort, I believe that the City Council must review the General Fund mandated balance to preserve the safety of our residents. Currently, the General Fund must maintain a balance of the greater of a) \$1 million plus 25% of the prior year's corporate property tax levy or, b) 10% of expenditures as originally budgeted for the year. The City Council should review the existing fund balance in the General Fund and suspend the financial policy for one year to provide the necessary funding needed for public safety.

Conclusion

While I have not seen the proposed 2011 budget, the message is clear from my residents and those throughout the City of Aurora. The crime reduction in the City of Aurora is attributed to the various levels of crime mitigation the police officers of the City of Aurora employ, and those include but are not limited to the School Resource Officers, the Community Oriented Policing Officers, the Patrol Officers and Investigations, along with various other programs and initiatives. We need to maintain our Police and Fire staffing levels by looking at alternative solutions, in addition to the possible concessions. A reduction in staffing cannot occur.

1. City of Aurora Comprehensive Annual Financial Report for year ending December 31, 2009, page 54.